



Gunnison Basin/ Grand Valley Water Forum

Gunnison Basin/Grand Valley Water Forum Newsletter



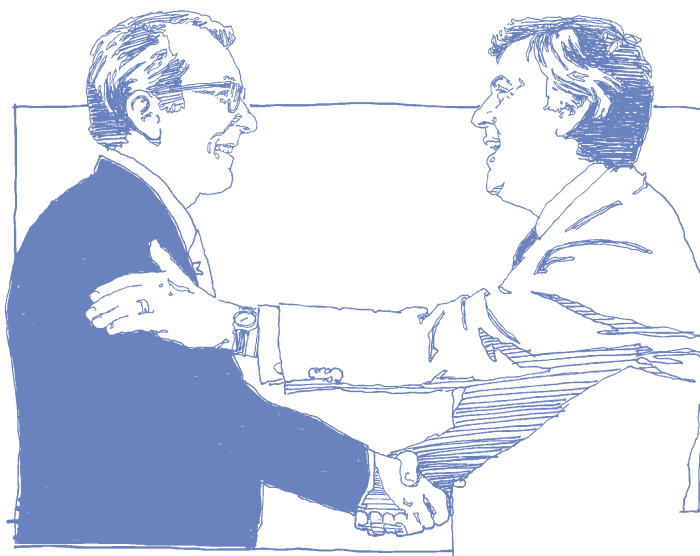
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Merger in the News!

Welcome to the first newsletter of the newly formed Gunnison Basin-Grand Valley Water Forum. Two organizations, the Gunnison/Grand Valley Water-Quality Forum and the Mesa County Water Association, are in the process of merging to form the Gunnison Basin/Grand Valley Water Forum. The mission of this new organization is to provide information and educational opportunities about water issues affecting the Gunnison River Basin and the Grand Valley. The Water Forum plans to continue sponsoring the annual water course in the Grand Valley with plans to expand the course to other key locations in the Gunnison River Basin. The Water Course is held in the first quarter of the year and covers various topics related to water, for example water law, water quality, and the role of water in geologic hazards. In addition, seminars and workshops will be sponsored by the Water Forum to provide information and updates on specific water issues. For example, recently, the Water Forum sponsored a workshop held in Delta on Total Maximum Daily Loads. More on that issue later in the newsletter. In addition, the Water Forum plans to publish a quarterly newsletter that will focus on a specific water-related issue and provide updates on various watershed groups and processes.

As the Water Forum gets started, we invite you to join us by participating as a member of the Water Forum. Even if you cannot attend our meetings, we encourage you to submit topics and ideas that would benefit from being in the Water Forum newsletter or covered in a seminar or workshop. For further information about the Gunnison Basin-Grand Valley Water Forum contact Mike Baker at 970-248-0637 (mbaker@uc.usbr.gov) or Butch Clark at 970-641-2907 (jpclark@rmi.net). Either way, we look forward to working with you to provide a reliable steady source of information on water issues in our area.



Workshop on Total Maximum Daily Loads

On May 21 in Delta, about 30 people attended a workshop, sponsored by the Water Forum, to discuss the issues of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). Bruce Zander a specialist in TMDLs from Region 8 of the Environmental Protection Agency presented an overview of TMDLs, how they are developed, and other areas that have successfully implemented TMDLs programs. For example, Bruce mentioned TMDLs have been developed for selenium loading in California and South Dakota.

The need for development of a TMDL is triggered by provisions of the Federal Clean Water Act and only applies to surface waters. When water-quality standards are exceeded for a constituent regulated by the Clean Water Act, development of a TMDL is required. Load is the transport of a water-quality constituent and is usually measured in pounds or tons per day. Water-quality constituents are metals, salts, or other compounds detected in water. The intent of implementing a plan for TMDLs is to reduce constituent loading to attain a water-quality standard set under the Clean Water Act. Essentially, using the TMDL process, sources of the constituent are identified, natural sources are identified, and plans are developed that will reduce loading of the constituent. However, Bruce indicated that the intention of developing a TMDL is not to reinvent the wheel but to build on existing remediation or pollution prevention efforts.

The basic provisions of a TMDL apply to point sources (discharge from a pipe) and non-point sources (diffuse sources such as runoff from a parking lot, hillside, or cultivated field). Nationwide, non-point sources can be a much larger source of constituent loading, above natural levels, than point sources. Since the inception of the Clean Water Act in 1972, TMDLs have usually been developed to address point source discharges. However in recent

years, third party lawsuits have compelled EPA and the States to develop TMDLs to address non-point sources as required by the Clean Water Act. Therefore, although TMDLs are required by the Clean Water Act, Bruce emphasized that the Clean Water Act does not provide authority for implementing TMDLs developed to address non-point sources. However, he did mention that developing a plan for TMDLs improves the opportunity to obtain restoration funds for a watershed.

Development of a plan for a TMDL should take into consideration local issues (politics, economics, and social conditions) and the feasibility (available technology and reasonable cost) of reducing constituent loading. A TMDL does not have to be a complex plan and does not single out or target particular individuals to implement the plan. When asked the question about whether constituent loading from irrigated areas is considered reversible, Bruce replied that socioeconomic impacts are considered when designating load allocations and that there may be provisions for an "emergency shut-off valve" in case of severe economic hardship. More information on TMDLs is available on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl>.

In 1998, the issue of TMDLs in the lower Gunnison River Basin led to the formation Selenium Task Force*. The Task Force is working to address issues related to the reduction of dissolved-selenium loading for various streams and water bodies in the lower Gunnison River Basin.

* For information on the Selenium Task Force see their website <http://www.seleniumtaskforce.org> or contact Karla Brown Selenium Task Force coordinator/facilitator at 970-249-3935 or via email (kbrown@coop.ext.colostate.edu)

Watershed Groups and Issue-Related Processes

There are many groups meeting throughout the Gunnison Basin and the Grand Valley addressing many and varied water issues. At some level these issues may be related and overlap. One of the goals of the Water Forum is to serve as a clearing house for information related to the activities of the various groups convened throughout the area. To that end, the following is an initial list of those groups. Please note that this list is under construction and will be updated in future news letters as information becomes available. Plans are to begin highlighting activities of one or more groups in each future news letter.

Watershed groups and issue-related processes underway
in the Gunnison River Basin and Grand Valley:

Name of Group	Contact Person
Aspinall Operations participants/workgroup	Dan Crabtree, USBR (970)248-0600
CDOW River Watch Program	Barb Horn, CDOW (303)291-7338
Colorado Watershed Assembly	Richard Fox, twp@treeswaterpeople.org
Division 4 (SWAT)	Dave Kanzer, CRWCD (970)945-8522
Upper Colorado Recovery Program	Bob Muth, USFWS (303)969-7322
Coordinated Reservoir Operations Study	Malcom Wilson, USBR (970)962-4317
U.S. Fish and Wildlife flow recommendation.....	Chuck McAda, USFWS (970)245-9319
Gunnison River Programmatic Biological Opinion	Dan McAuliffe, DNR, (303)866-3441
Fruitgrowers Reservoir Coalition	David Seivers (970)872-3438
GMUG National Forest Pathfinder Project	John Almy, USFS (970)874-6600
Gunnison Basin Selenium Task Force	Karla Brown, CSU Ext. (970)249-3935
National Irrigation Water Quality Program	Mike Baker, USBR (970)248-0637
National Park Service instream flow filing.....	Mark Wondzell, NPS (970)225-3512
North Fork River Improvement Association.....	Calvin Campbell and Jim Link
North Fork Water Quality Monitoring Project	Karla Brown CSU Ext. (970)249-3935
Upper Colorado National Water Quality Assessment	Doug Druliner, USGS (303)236-4882
UGRWCD Water Management Plan.....	Kathleen Curry, (970)641-6065